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### **HOUSE APPROVES JOINT FUNDING BILL FOR '07 Appropriations**

*Measure Eliminates Earmarks, Cuts 60 Programs, Provides For Critical Investments*

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. House of Representatives today passed, on a bipartisan basis with 57 Republican joining 229 Democrats, a \$463.5 billion spending plan to provide for government operations through September 30 -- the end of the fiscal year. Staying within the spending limits imposed by the budget, the measure eliminates earmarks, cuts funding for more than 60 programs, and shifts nearly \$10 billion in federal spending to meet critical investment needs, including <sup>vet</sup>erans and military health care, education, health care, science research, and transportation.

Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI), Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, co-authored the measure with Senator Robert C. Byrd (D-WV), Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, to wrap up the nine of eleven spending bills that the Republican led Congress did not finish last year.

“The most fundamental obligation of the Congress is to decide what activities the government needs to engage in and to provide the financing for those activities. When last year’s Congress walked away leaving the budget process uncompleted they ducked that obligation and left their mess for us to clean up,” said Obey.

“I don’t expect people to love this proposal, I don’t love this proposal, but at least we’ve made the hard choices necessary to bring last year’s issues to a conclusion so we can turn the page and deal with next year’s priorities.”

Obey noted that, among the investments for high priority needs, the measure includes:

- o A \$260 increase in the maximum Pell Grant, to \$4,310, to help more than 5.3 million college students pay rising college expenses, as well as new funding for 6,700 schools that failed to meet the standards set by No Child Left Behind and increased funding for Head Start.

- o A \$3.6 billion increase for veterans' health care "to provide service for an anticipated increase of at least 325,000 patients and to meet rising health care costs" and \$1.2 billion more for defense health care.

- o Over \$200 million more to finance construction of 300 new or expanded Community Health Centers serving 1.2 million new patients and increased funding for the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, and global HIV/AIDS initiatives.

- o Funds to double the number of intelligence analysts at the FBI since 9/11 and increased support for state and local law enforcement programs, including the COPS program.

- o A \$3.5 billion increase for federal highways - an increase that was specified under the 2005 highway law. That could mean a \$52 million increase in Wisconsin's federal highway aids and 2,500 new jobs.

Sticking to the moratorium that they ordered until new rules intended to reform the earmarking process are fully in place, Obey and Byrd stripped all earmarks from the measure. "This decision doesn't come without pain. Many worthwhile earmarks are not funded in this measure, but we had to take this step to clear the decks, clean up the process and start over. Hopefully, whatever short term pain this causes will be more than made up for in the long run," Obey said.

The Senate must now act before the measure can be sent to the President to be signed into law.

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